consultation toolkit

May 2004

CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

The Cabinet Office, in its *Code of Practice on Consultation*, sets out the following six criteria as best practice guidelines for any consultation exercise:

1. ***Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.***

    Consultation needs to be started early and relevant stakeholders need to be identified. Written consultation is recommended for large consultation exercises, but using whatever methods are most appropriate remains the key criterion.

2. ***Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.***

    Ensure questions are focused but accept all responses. Openly and honestly state who is likely to be affected by the issue that is being consulted on. Make it clear which questions are particularly important, and ask representative groups for a summary response. Clearly state deadlines and contact details.

3. ***Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.***

    Use plain language, avoid jargon and unnecessary technical terms to make it as accessible as possible. Make the consultation available in a range of formats and raise awareness of it amongst the community. Tailor the exercise where necessary to be accessible to specific groups.

4. ***Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.***

    Analysis of responses should be done both quantitatively and qualitatively to give an idea of the general feeling from responses as well as some statistical data. The consultation document should contain the deadline date and how feedback will be made available to consultees. Feedback must then show how the responses were used and a summary of the next steps.

5. ***Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation coordinator.***

    Each department will have a designated consultation coordinator who will oversee and monitor consultation exercises being carried out within the division. Future exercises, a summary of results and any tips or lessons learnt will be communicated with other coordinators within the council,

and with the corporate consultation coordinator, via email and regular meetings

6. ***Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.***

This is rather too prescriptive and does not fit with the Cheltenham Borough Council flexible consultation climate. Carrying out an evaluation of consultation is a good idea, although a comprehensive RIA is not necessary. But such evaluation will throw up areas where bureaucracy can be reduced to help streamline the process.

Whilst there is nothing wrong with any of these premises, they are best viewed as a set of good practice guidelines and not as rules to be strictly adhered to. The CBC consultation climate allows each division to consult how it deems fit, and a recent audit of the divisions showed that on the whole they are consulting appropriately, although there is room for increasing their effectiveness. This flexibility works well and is something that will remain, but it will need coordinating carefully.

The six criteria above provide a handy checklist for consultation and is something that can be referred to throughout any exercise. There are a number of areas to consider when planning a consultation exercise, and these are dealt with in the rest of this toolkit.

There are a large number of methods than can be used in consulting with particular stakeholders or on a particular issue. The list below sets out the main methods used, pros and cons of each and an indication as to which Cheltenham Borough Council divisions currently use it or if it was used for corporate exercises or for Comprehensive Performance Assessment purposes. There are also contact details for consultation representatives within each division.

Good use can be made of this list if it is used to generate ideas about using a blend of different techniques to get a good consultation response. This is one of the major challenges of a consultation exercise – finding an effective mix of methods. No method will be as effective or give results that are as representative or inclusive as a range of methods.

If any of these techniques sound appropriate then it is suggested that the division that uses them be contacted for advice. This may also help to promote joint-working.

Method	Pros	Cons	Used by
Benchmarking	Provides context by comparison with similar organisations Sharing of information can generate new ideas or promote joint-working Can be formal or informal Responses will be informed	Organisations may be too similar or not similar enough Issue of private, conflicting agendas Does not represent the views of service users	Festivals & Entertainment
Citizen's Juries	Can be used for complex issues Several days spent on the issue giving informed opinions Allows people to become more involved in decision-making Encourages the council to be open and honest	Issue of representation Expensive and time-consuming Produces only qualitative results Views expressed can be over-emotive	No division at CBC currently uses this method *[NB. It has been used by Gloucestershire Constabulary]*
Citizen's Panels (e.g.	Can consult on complex issues if members are	Panel members can become too informed	Viewpoint has been used

Viewpoint)	properly briefed Membership can be structured to be fully representative of the community Can be used to track change in opinion over time Consultation can be qualitative or quantitative	or sympathetic of the authority and less representative Membership needs frequent refreshment to avoid stagnation Not suitable for consultation about limited-use services or hard-to-reach groups	successfully since 1999. Many divisions and external organisations contribute questions to upcoming surveys.
Comment & Suggestion cards/leaflets	Very cheap way of monitoring users' views Cost effective Anonymity of approach encourages honest feedback Equal significance given to all issues Service delivery can be closely linked to user feedback Can ask open questions (qualitative results) or closed (quantitative)	Issue of representation More likely to receive complaints than compliments Careful wording needed to avoid ambiguity Low response levels	Festivals & Entertainments Public Protection Art Gallery & Museum Economic Development & Tourism Neighbourhood Regeneration
Critical friend	Objective but informed view of a service Information and criteria can be set beforehand to focus criticism	One-off impression, not typical reflection Danger of criticism being too channelled and non-representative	Art Gallery & Museum Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Drop-in event/surgery	Opportunity for more informal consultation Flexibility allows people to come when they like and stay as long as they like Information can be provided on the day Questions can be dealt with face-to-face Possibility to do this online as well	Issue of representation Attendances can be low	No division at CBC currently uses this method Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Focus Groups (user & non-user)	Allows more detailed responses to issues Targeted recruitment allows consultation with groups normally excluded Participants appreciate being *invited* to take part	Careful recruitment is needed to ensure inclusion Recruitment can be time-consuming, avoiding self-selecting groups One group will not be representative of all	Public Protection Art Gallery & Museum Comprehensive Performance Assessment

	Flexibility of setting allows exploration of other issues	views Fairly costly Groups may require close monitoring to prevent digression/monopolisation	
"Friends of…" / service user groups	Gives informed views from committed parties Voluntary membership ensures reliability of results Joint working between agencies High levels of collective knowledge are developed Quick and cost effective method once established Members feel valued if results are fed back	Risk of over-reliance Issue of representation Issue of private, conflicting agendas	Festivals & Entertainments Green Environment Art Gallery & Museum Built Environment
Letters	Encourages comments from affected stakeholders Adequate information can be provided Range of response mechanisms can be offered Recipients feel valued at being consulted and if results are fed back	Response rates can be low Require careful wording Danger of giving the impression a decision has already been reached Responses can be an excuse for a general rant	Most CBC divisions employ this at some point, but it is regularly used by: Integrated Transport Policy & PR Green Environment Built Environment
Media notices / publicity / signposting	Reaches a wide range of people Can complement and raise awareness of other methods Range of response mechanisms can be offered Signposts to further information can be useful	Response rates can be low Cost effectiveness may be an issue May not be seen/heard by everyone	Used sporadically by divisions carrying out a major consultation exercise
'Mystery shopper' / observation exercises	Snapshot of service delivery and standards Allows external insight into normal service practice Can highlight more obvious gaps in service	One-off impression, not typical reflection	No division at CBC currently uses this method
Neighbourhood /	Can be consulted regularly once structure is	Issue of representation	Many divisions take advantage of

community fora	established Members have a genuine interest in and knowledge of local issues If led by council members can provide useful links with local people	Groups may require close monitoring to prevent digression or monopolisation Can be difficult to run in areas with no neighbourhood identity	such fora on an ad hoc basis
Online consultation	Quick, easy question and answer format Can be used for specific exercises or for generic comment boards A lot of information can be accessed online with links to documents etc Useful for reaching some hard-to-reach groups such as young people Cost effective	Danger of excluding some groups who are not web-wise Can give random results that are of limited use Issue of representation Response rates may be low if not well-advertised	Policy & Public Relations Green Environment Neighbourhood Regeneration Public Protection Finance & Asset Management
Public Meetings / Exhibitions	Opportunity to hear the public voice/encourage community participation Establish links between service users and providers High attendance can be achieved if meetings are promoted correctly Innovative approaches can increase attendance Allows the public to ask questions Puts a face to the council	Issue of representation Meetings may require close monitoring to prevent digression or monopolisation The target group and issue to be discussed need to be carefully considered in arranging venue and time Expensive and time-consuming	Integrated Transport Policy & PR Neighbourhood Regeneration Built Environment
Referenda	The opinions of a large number of people can be obtained quickly and efficiently Results are clear cut Returns can be given via a range of mechanisms	Expensive and time-consuming Attendances can be low Responses are limited to simple choice answers Used for single issues requiring little explanation	The council undertook a referendum of opinion on the proposals for a new political structure in June 2001.

SMS text messaging	Fast and effective Can reach certain hard-to-reach groups, particularly young people Can be used for a variety of reasons Responses can be sent from anywhere at anytime Confirmation is instantaneous with more detailed methods (emails, calls, letters) used later	Responses are limited to simple choice answers Used for single issues requiring little explanation Reliance on technology that some may not be comfortable enough using	No division at CBC currently uses this method
Staff Consultation exercises (e.g. emails, memos, staff sessions)	Creates ownership of corporate issues Increases knowledge of corporate issues Encourages ideas from each divisional viewpoint Highlights areas where joint working is feasible	Attendance/response rates can be low Needs to be made relevant to individual staff Information about how results will be used, and feedback afterwards, are required	*Corporate consultation* Policy & PR
Stakeholder Conference	Views and ideas can be sought on an informed basis Focus can be given to certain aspects Resources can be shared Methods can be more interactive	Danger of conflicting issues and ownership Attendance may be low Approach needs to keep discussion moving	Policy & PR Community Services
Surveys – electronic	Large number of people can be contacted at relatively low cost Easy to carry out in-house Some software packages can do basic analysis Access to some hard-to-reach groups (e.g. young people) Easy to contact people over wide geographical areas Respondent can fill out survey in own time which can give more considered responses Response at the click of a button	Issues of representation and inclusion Some groups can find filling out forms online daunting People with poor literacy skills or minority language speakers may be put off Some questions are difficult to ask – e.g. those relating to awareness	While not specific surveys, there are a number of divisions that have online feedback mechanisms: *Corporate comments page* Green Environment Neighbourhood Regeneration Public Protection Finance & Asset Management

Surveys – face to face	Questionnaires can be longer and more detailed than postal surveys	Costs are higher than postal surveys	Sport & Play
	Surveys can be designed so different questions can be asked depending on the circumstances	Time-consuming and labour-intensive	
	Answers can be explored more fully	Surveys may have to be done at different times of the day/week	
	Response rates are generally higher	Ideally interviewers should be trained	
	Respondents can be selected	May require minority language or sign language interpreters	
	More information and visual aids can be used	Time-consuming for the respondent	
Surveys – postal	Large number of people can be contacted at relatively low cost	Issue of representation for random samples	Neighbourhood Regeneration
	The sample results can be statistically accurate	Some questions are difficult to ask – e.g. those relating to awareness	Festivals & Entertainments
	Respondent can fill out survey in own time which can give more considered responses	Surveys need to be kept short and simple or respondents will be put off	Front Line Services
	Range of response mechanisms can be offered	Response rates can be low	Policy & PR
Surveys – telephone	Large number of people can be contacted at relatively low cost	Issue of representation	No division at CBC currently uses this method
	Easy to carry out in-house	Issue of people with hearing impairments, minority language speakers, etc	
	Easy to contact people over wide geographical areas	Excludes households without a telephone or ex-directory	
	Answers can be explored more fully	Respondents could be distracted	
	Access to some hard-to-reach groups (e.g. disabled)	Refusal rates can be high	
Surveys – visitor & brochure	Encourages feedback on recently accessed services	Response rates can be low	Economic Development & Tourism
	Respondents are more likely to make suggestions for improvements	More likely to receive complaints than compliments	Festivals & Entertainments
	Allows complimentary feedback as well as critical	Comments may be too random or too vague	Art Gallery & Museum

	Responses should be well informed		
User Satisfaction Survey	Targets service users Allows services to be delivered according to need Identifies gaps in services Provides information that can be used in service reviews Respondents are more likely to make suggestions for improvements	Information about how results will be used, and feedback afterwards, are required Careful wording is required to avoid ambiguity Responses can be an excuse for a general rant	Economic Development & Tourism Neighbourhood Regeneration Public Protection Festivals & Entertainments Front Line Services Built Environment

Some of the methods listed above are particularly appropriate when used to consult specific stakeholder groups. Effective consultation with these groups will result if the right blend of techniques is found for each stakeholder group. To achieve this, the techniques below can be used, but the issues to consider should be borne in mind when trying to find the right blend. IIt should also be pointed out that this list is not meant to be exhaustive and other more innovative techniques may be available.

3.1 Community Partners

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	There is a wealth of specific local knowledge that can be tapped using the correct methods, but care maybe needed to ensure that other broader concerns do not cloud the issue being debated and to avoid consultation fatigue. Feedback is also important as many partners will need to feed back results to the people they represent.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Focus groups Letters Neighbourhood / community fora Online consultation Public Meetings / Exhibitions Referenda Surveys – electronic, postal

3.2 Council staff

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	When consulting council staff on corporate issues it is important to keep the response mechanisms as simple and quick as possible. The relevance to staff and how they carry out their jobs on a day-to-day basis should also be made very clear so that the subject is not just dismissed out of hand. A good level of participation will ensure greater ownership of an issue or proposal.

POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Focus groups
	Online consultation
	Staff sessions, emails memos, etc
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face

3.3 Council tax payers

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The key consideration when consulting with council tax payers is transparency. These groups will be most concerned with how their money is being spent, and consultation on new proposals must be clear as to what costs will be incurred and what impact, if any, this will have on the level of tax. Methods should ideally also be as cost effective as possible, and this could even be communicated to consultees.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Citizen's juries
	Citizen's Panels
	Focus groups
	Letters
	Media notices / publicity / signposting
	Neighbourhood / community fora
	Online consultation
	Public Meetings / Exhibitions
	Referenda
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.4 Councillors

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	As elected representatives, councillors will constantly bear in mind how any proposals will impact upon their ward. With this in mind, any consultation exercise should be clear as to the impact that it might have on a specific area and its residents, as well as the borough as a whole.

POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Letters
	Online consultation
	Referenda
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.5 Faith/cultural groups

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	There are a number of specific agendas that have to be taken into consideration in consulting with thematic groups. Often any replies are going to be very focused around the area of interest for each group and therefore the questions need to be carefully structured. But if this is done there is a wealth of knowledge that can be drawn upon.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Citizen's juries
	Comments & suggestion cards / leaflets
	Focus groups
	'Friends of' service user groups
	Letters
	Online consultation
	Public Meetings / Exhibitions
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.6 Neighbourhood groups

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	Similar to faith/cultural groups in the agendas that needs to be considered, but again if the questions are carefully compiled and phrased then there is a lot of local knowledge that can be tapped into and used. It is important to provide adequate information to consultees on the impact any proposal will have on a particular area/neighbourhood.
POSSIBLE	Citizen's juries

TECHNIQUES	Focus groups
	'Friends of' service user groups
	Letters
	Media notices / publicity / signposting
	Neighbourhood / community fora
	Online consultation
	Public Meetings / Exhibitions
	Referenda
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.7 Other councils

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The useful aspect of consulting with other councils is the level of corporate knowledge that can be safely assumed, allowing for a more in-depth consultation exercise. It is important, however, to allow sufficient timescales for responses due to the pressures placed on council staff. With this in mind it is perhaps best to keep exercises as straightforward to answer as possible, and this is an area where online consultation may prove very useful.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Benchmarking
	Letters
	Online consultation
	Staff sessions, emails memos, etc
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.8 Private sector organisations

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The key issue for any private sector organisation is in determining where any proposal would be of benefit or disbenefit to their business. This makes information provision very important, as well as honesty and transparency when it comes to costs and funding issues. But such

	organisations have good contacts which can be used as well as a range of corporate expertise that can be of great use.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Letters Online consultation Referenda Stakeholder Conference Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.9 Public sector organisations

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	When consulting public sector organisations it is important to bear in mind that their resources are usually very tightly stretched and any proposal that is consulted upon will be viewed from this stance. And again it is the provision of information that is the key point of any exercise. The public sector also has a good collection of expertise and often good links into the community.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Benchmarking Letters Online consultation Stakeholder Conference Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.10 Residents

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The key to consulting residents is in assuring them that their views have been listened to – feedback is crucial. The format of the survey is also important as residents need to feel confident that the decision has not already been made, but there is a danger of having a survey that is too open.
POSSIBLE	Focus groups Letters

TECHNIQUES	Media notices / publicity / signposting
	Neighbourhood / community fora
	Online consultation
	Panels
	Public Meetings / Exhibitions
	Referenda
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

3.11 Schools

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	Schools are often under a lot of pressure and so the timing and format of consultation exercises are crucial. Having said that there is potentially a captive audience of young people (a traditionally *hard-to-reach group*) who can give good results if the exercise is structured carefully.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Online consultation
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face
	Innovative methods (see *hard-to-reach* groups below)

3.12 Service users

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	A major issue with consulting service users is in encouraging complimentary comments or suggestions as well as asking for criticism, which is often more forthcoming. The views of service users should ideally be used to inform delivery plans, and this needs to be made clear to consultees. Feedback is also important.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Comment & suggestion cards / leaflets
	Focus groups
	'Friends of' service user groups
	Letters

	Online consultation
	Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone, visitor/brochure
	User satisfaction survey

3.13 Voluntary organisations

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The main issue with these organisations is that they are voluntary, and this has clear implications for any resources or time available. Therefore consultation exercises should be carefully tailored to be as quick and cost efficient as possible, and any potential impact that a proposal may have on the organisation needs to be openly stated at the outset. Involving organisations early is often more effective as subsequent consultation can be shaped according to the lessons learnt. It is also important to consider which groups an organisation may represent in deciding how to approach consultation exercises.
POSSIBLE TECHNIQUES	Benchmarking Focus groups Letters Online consultation Referenda Stakeholder Conference Surveys – electronic, face-to-face, postal, telephone

There are traditionally a number of groups in the community that are difficult to include in the consultation process due to access difficulties or other obstacles such as language or under-representation. It is important, however, that efforts are made to include these groups in any consultation exercise on issues that may potentially have an impact on their lives. To do this, there are a number of more innovative techniques that can be used and often a community representative organisation that can be contacted.

Some of the traditional techniques listed above will glean responses that include some of these groups as part of the wider community. But some groups may feel less comfortable with formal processes and it is if these groups are consulted specifically that the following guidelines may prove useful. It is important with such groups that consultation is taken out of the traditional environments and directly to them when necessary and extra efforts are made if required. The amount of informed views and suggestions that should emerge if done diligently will make it worthwhile. These groups will also feel more part of the community decision-making process, another advantage.

This section describes some of the most common hard-to-reach groups and gives an idea as to the issues that need to be considered, some suggestions for the methodology or approach to use and s contact details for community groups that may be willing to become involved with any consultation exercise. It highlights the main point that certain groups are not actually that hard to reach, it is merely a question of learning how best to approach them.

There are, however, some key points to remember when consulting any hard-to-reach group[1]:

→ **Be clear about who they are**
It is easy to assume that hard-to-reach groups are homogenous – they're not. Find out as much as possible about your audience.

→ **Work out what you want from them**
Before consulting look at what you are trying to achieve. This will avoid asking too much of prospective consultees.

→ **Work out how to get their attention**
Every group in society can be reached somehow. Find out which organisations already talk to your audience and see what works.

→ **Is literacy an issue?**
It has been estimated that around seven million adults in England and Wales have literacy or numeracy challenges – can your messages be understood?

→ **Look for internal or external joint-working opportunities**
Find out if front-line staff are engaging your audience and talk to them. Also look for other organisations in the area that may also be keen to consult the same groups.

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[1] Source: '19 ways to reach the hard to reach', *Policy: Reaching the hard to reach*, Winter 2002, page 2

→ **Take the consultation to them**
Make consultation as easy as possible by taking the questions to them, at times that suit them and in places that they feel comfortable.

→ **Be aware of your image**
Councils traditionally have the reputation of deciding first and consulting later – be realistic as to how you may be seen by your key audiences.

→ **Establish a two-way relationship – talking and listening**
Consultation should be seen as merely the first step in a relationship that will outlive your immediate needs and address some of theirs.

→ **Demonstrate that you have listened**
Feedback is invaluable in cementing a healthy consultative relationship – ideally show them what difference their thoughts, words and ideas have made.

→ **Avoid asking meaningless questions**
Do not make assumptions as to the level of prior knowledge of your audience, but make the necessary information freely accessible before the event.

→ **Consider first and lasting impressions**
Look at how you interact, at your dress, language and style and be open and honest in your approach. This early impression will affect the lasting relationship.

→ **Be mindful of language barriers and key words**
Consider which words are meaningful to the group you are consulting and blend them with certain of your own words that will give credibility.

→ **Give them something they want**
If you can begin by giving them, or proving that a previous consultation gave them, something that may have been promised then you will start on a positive note.

→ **Take your time**
Although consultation is often specific and time-sensitive, a relationship will need to be established early to make a real connection and build trust.

→ **Allow them to have their say**
Be flexible enough to listen to what they have to say to you, even beyond what you came to hear. Encourage them to feel able to talk to you.

→ **Select your contacts carefully**
A consultation contact should be one who can bear full and frank views and also have adequate influence to feedback to their community.

Technique

The remainder of this section deals with specific approaches that can be used and some methods or techniques that may be suitable for specific hard-to-reach groups. There is also a list of some community representative bodies in Cheltenham that could be contacted to provide a response on behalf of a specific community:

Techniques for consulting hard to reach groups

4.1 Black and minority ethnic groups

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The major issue with dealing with BME groups is the level of diversity. The ethnic minority population in Cheltenham is small, but strong and very diverse and any consultation exercise needs to recognise and make allowances for this. There is also an issue with the language barrier which may prevent many BME groups taking part in regular consultation exercises.
METHODOLOGY	Many of the public or community methods mentioned in the above section can be used to consult BME groups. The difference comes about from any specific needs a group may have and this means tailoring any exercise (meetings, letters, surveys) to these needs, with translator services if required. Perhaps the best approach is conducting surveys on a face-to-face basis if possible.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Cheltenham Minority Ethnic Forum Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF Telephone: 01242 775284 Email: injue@cmef.fsnet.co.uk Gloucestershire Race Equality Council 15 Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1HG Telephone: 01452 301 290 Email: enquiries@glosrec.org.uk The Indian Association Cheltenham Hindu Community Centre, 64 Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL50 4AY Telephone: 01242 584 250 (Mr N J Patel) ***(NOTE: please include a note with any consultation saying 'Important consultation documents: please read and discuss at your next committee meeting and let me have some feedback.')***

4.2 Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The main issue to consider here is that gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people are not readily identifiable as a group and their needs will not differ greatly from the rest of the community, except for a few specific areas such as policing and healthcare. It is therefore important to utilise the focused responses that can be obtained, but there is another issue in identifying the sources of such responses.
METHODOLOGY	Again, many of the methods mentioned can be used, but the issue is over how to target the specific gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender sections of the community. The best tactic would be to consult through the community groups and helplines. These services may also be able to offer advice as to the best approach to take.
COMMUNITY	Cheltenham Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Society

GROUPS	Students' Union, University of Gloucestershire, PO Box 220, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2QF Telephone: N/A Email: lgbt@blueyonder.co.uk Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Community PO Box 23, Gloucester, GL1 1YW Telephone: 07050 627273 Email: info@gglc.demon.co.uk Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Friend Helpline PO Box 171, Gloucester, GL1 4YE Telephone: 01452 306 800 Email: glhglos@dircon.co.uk

4.3 Homeless people

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	There are a host of difficulties trying to consult people who are itinerant or who have no permanent home. Such groups often have more pressing priorities and are unlikely to be adequately represented locally. Such people will have specific needs and very informed views relating to these needs. Exercises need to be planned so that there is a clear impact on such groups that their responses can influence, but also that these responses will be treated with the strictest confidence.
METHODOLOGY	The fact that these consultees have no permanent address rules out many traditional techniques. The best approach would seem to be to conduct surveys on a face-to-face basis, but some authorities keep lists of people placed in temporary accommodation which may be of value, but need to be handled sensitively.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Cheltenham YMCA 6 Vittoria Walk, Cheltenham, GL50 1TP Telephone: 01242 524 024 (Kate Grant) Email: info@cheltenhamymca.claranet.co.uk Gloucestershire Forum for Young Single Homelessness 4 Wellington Street, Gloucester, GL1 1RA Telephone: 01452 381 650 Email: N/A

4.4 Non-users of council services

ISSUES TO	Non-users are a difficult group to identify and include. They will not form a cohesive group, but are part of the community. Because of this they will only be contacted as part of a wider exercise, and so it is important to recognise such responses and act upon them. The approach

CONSIDER	to take is that they are potential users.
METHODOLOGY	Public or community methods will reach the most people and so have the best chance of encouraging responses from non-users.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	N/A

4.5 Older people

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	Consulting with older people can produce a good amount of responses as they may have time to spare. But the format needs careful consideration and should be kept as simple as possible, whilst also inviting comments. Other considerations like whether to utilise online consultation also need to be made.
METHODOLOGY	Many of the traditional techniques can be used to consult with older people, but some such as face-to-face or telephone interviews may unnerve some older people. There are other issues to do with access and hearing that should also be considered when choosing a venue.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Age Concern Gloucestershire Bleak House, 26 Station Road, Gloucester, GL1 1EW Telephone: 01452 422 660 Email: admin@ageconcernglos.org.uk Care & Repair Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF Telephone: 01242 512 280 Email: c&rchelt@bromford.co.uk Cheltenham Pensioners' Forum 233 Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL51 3HZ Telephone: 01242 243 439 (Len Mason, Secretary) Email: N/A

4.6 People with caring responsibilities

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	Time is a big issue with this group. The responsibilities placed upon them are such that both the timing and the format of any consultation attempt are crucial. Making it relevant and providing adequate information are also very important.
METHODOLOGY	Lengthy consultation methods requiring consultees to devote significant time would not be appropriate for this group. Techniques that have a range of questions that can be answered quickly and easily and are clearly relevant would be the best approach. There are a range of

	organisations and groups that exist to support and help carers in the area, and it is recommended that advantage is taken of the knowledge and contacts these groups may offer.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Alzheimer's Society (Cheltenham & District) Support Group Highbury Church Hall, Cheltenham Telephone: 01242 511 111 (Audrey Knapp) Email: N/A Cheltenham & Cotswold Childminding Association 10 Wordsworth Avenue, St Marks, Cheltenham, GL51 7DY Telephone: 01242 227 728 (Sue Lough-Scott) Email: N/A Cheltenham & District Carers & Families (CADCAF) Pengwern, Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2PZ Telephone: 01242 222117 Email: Julie@CADCAF.co.uk Cheltenham Carers Group Highbury Church Hall, Cheltenham Telephone: 01242 578 869 (Claire Clucas) Email: N/A Dementia Care Trust (Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury) City Works, Gloucester Resource Centre, Alfred Street, Gloucester, GL1 4DF) Telephone: 01452 550 066 Email: ccm@dct.org.uk Gloucestershire Association for Mental Health Belsize House, 1 Brunswick Square, Gloucester, GL1 1UG Telephone: 01452 416 575 Email: pam@gamh.fsnet.co.uk Gloucestershire Carers Project Princess Royal Trust Carers Network, Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LZ Telephone: 01452 386 283 Email: mail@gloscarers.org.uk Parkinson's Disease Society – Cheltenham c/o 13 Lynton Road, Hucclecote, Gloucester, GL3 3HX Telephone: 01452 616 805 (Audrey Pound) Email: N/A

4.7 Disabled people

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The mobility or other impairment issue becomes important when arranging meetings or other attendance exercises. It is important to choose venues carefully and look at access and other facilities, including how easy the venue is to get to. But disabled people can offer a good knowledge of some of the areas where the town needs improving and can often offer informed suggestions as to how this could be achieved.
METHODOLOGY	Methods that remove the access issue, such as telephone or postal surveys, can be useful, but meetings can offer disabled people a chance to get more involved. Holding an exercise at an existing disability centre will take consultation to this group and again solves the access issue. Aids such as large print, minicom, induction loop system and sign language will help disabled people get involved.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Gloucestershire Disability Forum 83 Cheltenham Road, Gloucester, GL2 0JG Telephone: 01452 530 184 (Sue McClung) Email: glos.lifestyles@blueyonder.co.uk

4.8 Socially excluded people

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	In the past these people have been identified as one of the most difficult to consult successfully. A combination of disadvantage factors can impact severely on their daily lives, meaning they take little notice of attempts at consultation. Issues of confidence, comprehension or ability to articulate may also have an effect. They will have specific needs and many will be service users and their views need to be encouraged if possible. Specific consultation becomes more difficult if such groups fall into other categories such as BME groups or homelessness, and this compounds the problem. Online consultation, for example, may not work well.
METHODOLOGY	Tailoring any consultation exercise very important. An exercise that is structured to be as personal and relevant to this group as possible may encourage more responses. Adequate information should be given in an appropriate format and the potential influence that their views can have on proposals that will may affect their lives should be made very clear.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre (CHAC) 31 Prestbury Road, Cheltenham Telephone: 01242 226 672 Email: chelthousingaid@aol.com Hester's Way Neighbourhood Project Community Resource Centre, Cassin Drive, Cheltenham, G51 7SU 01242 521319 bernicet@hwnp.org.uk Whaddon, Lynworth & Priors Neighbourhood Project Project Centre, Wymans Road, Whaddon, Cheltenham, GL52 5PR Telephone: 01242 516 960

	Email: community@wlpnp.org.uk Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF Telephone: 01242 584 853 (Sue Larkman) Email: ccup@callnetuk.com

4.9 Travellers

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	Travellers are another poorly represented group that have specific needs that are often very different from the majority of the wider community. The issue of trust is a considerable one and any attempt at consultation should seek to establish this first.
METHODOLOGY	Of the traditional techniques, an open and honest face-to-face approach will perhaps be the best to adopt. One suggestion would be to try and encourage members of the travelling community to help with the consultation. This could help to build trust as well.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	N/A

4.10 Young people

ISSUES TO CONSIDER	The key consideration is that it is children and young people's right to be consulted in the decisions that affect them. Aside from this, there is a wealth of knowledge and opinion that can be very useful in shaping service delivery, but the approach needs to be carefully tailored to appeal to the specific age groups. Often innovative versions of existing methods can be very effective, and face-to-face surveys can help explain to young people what a proposal will mean to them. It is also a good way of building trust and getting them to open up.
METHODOLOGY	Very dependent on the age group. With younger children the use of pictures, drawings and other visual aids can be of great use. With younger adults it is crucial that they know their views are being taken seriously and that they are being listened to. If this can be proved to them via feedback then they will be more willing to take part again. In either case, it is vital that young people feel comfortable in being consulted. The use of online and electronic surveys and SMS text messaging technology can take advantage of more interactive techniques which could appeal to younger people.
COMMUNITY GROUPS	Connexions (Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Teams) 4 Imperial Square, Cheltenham, GL50 1QB Telephone: 01242 250 317 Email: info@connexionsglos.org.uk MAD (Making a Difference) – Young People's Council Grosvenor Hall, Grosvenor Square, Cheltenham

	Telephone: 01242 251 921 Email: madmail@cheltenham.gov.uk Gloucestershire Boys & Young Men Network Youth and Community Service Boys and Young Men Lead, The Lodge, 47 Lewis Lane, Cirencester, GL7 1EB Telephone: 01285 650 06 (Bernie Cox) Email: berniecox@cotswoldyouth.freeserve.co.uk Grapevine (Cheltenham) Grosvenor Hall, Grosvenor Square, Cheltenham Telephone: 01242 255 888 (Sarah Vallender) Email: grapevine@glosgrapevine.org.uk

The following is a list of community, voluntary and representative groups in Cheltenham and Gloucestershire that may be of use in trying to consult specific groups, areas or on specific subjects. It includes those listed above.

Black and minority ethnic groups

Cheltenham Minority Ethnic Forum
Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF
Telephone: 01242 775284 (Immanuel Njue)
Email: injue@cmef.fsnet.co.uk

Gloucestershire Race Equality Council
15 Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1HG
Telephone: 01452 301 290
Email: enquiries@glosrec.org.uk

The Indian Association
Cheltenham Hindu Community Centre, 64 Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL50 4AY
Telephone: 01242 584 250 (Mr N J Patel)
Email: N/A

Disabled people

Gloucestershire Disability Forum
83 Cheltenham Road, Gloucester, GL2 0JG
Telephone: 01452 530 184 (Sue McClung)
Email: glos.lifestyles@blueyonder.co.uk

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community

Cheltenham Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Society
Students' Union, University of Gloucestershire, PO Box 220, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2QF
Telephone: N/A
Email: lgbt@blueyonder.co.uk

Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Community
PO Box 23, Gloucester, GL1 1YW
Telephone: 07050 627273
Email: info@gglc.demon.co.uk

Gloucestershire Gay & Lesbian Friend Helpline
PO Box 171, Gloucester, GL1 4YE
Telephone: 01452 306 800
Email: glhglos@dircon.co.uk

Homeless people

Cheltenham YMCA
6 Vittoria Walk, Cheltenham, GL50 1TP
Telephone: 01242 524 024 (Kate Grant)
Email: info@cheltenhamymca.claranet.co.uk

Gloucestershire Forum for Young Single Homelessness
4 Wellington Street, Gloucester, GL1 1RA
Telephone: 01452 381 650
Email: N/A

Older people

Age Concern Gloucestershire
Bleak House, 26 Station Road, Gloucester, GL1 1EW
Telephone: 01452 422 660
Email: lindashepherd@ageconcernglos.org.uk

Care & Repair
Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF
Telephone: 01242 512 280 (Stuart Hobbs)
Email: c&rchelt@bromford.co.uk

Cheltenham Pensioners' Forum
233 Swindon Road, Cheltenham, GL51 3HZ
Telephone: 01242 243 439 (Len Mason, Secretary)
Email: N/A

People with caring responsibilities

Alzheimer's Society (Cheltenham & District) Support Group
Highbury Church Hall, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 511 111 (Audrey Knapp)
Email: N/A

Cheltenham & Cotswold Childminding Association
10 Wordsworth Avenue, St Marks, Cheltenham, GL51 7DY
Telephone: 01242 227 728 (Sue Lough-Scott)
Email: N/A

Cheltenham & District Carers & Families (CADCAF)
Pengwern, Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2PZ
Telephone: 01242 222117
Email: Julie@CADCAF.co.uk

Cheltenham & North Glos Mencap Society
Cockleford Mill, Cheltenham, GL53 9NW
Telephone: 01242 870 266 (Jackie Barrington-Browne)
Email: N/A

Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Crossroads
The Basement, 21 Rodney Road, Cheltenham, GL50 1HX
Telephone: 01242 584 844
Email: ros@crossroadschelt.fsnet.co.uk

Cheltenham Carers Group
Highbury Church Hall, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 578 869 (Claire Clucas)
Email: N/A

Dementia Care Trust (Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury)
City Works, Gloucester Resource Centre, Alfred Street, Gloucester, GL1 4DF)
Telephone: 01452 550 066
Email: ccm@dct.org.uk

Gloucestershire Association for Mental Health
Belsize House, 1 Brunswick Square, Gloucester, GL1 1UG
Telephone: 01452 416 575
Email: pam@gamh.fsnet.co.uk

Gloucestershire Carers Project
Princess Royal Trust Carers Network, Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LZ
Telephone: 01452 386 283 (Vivienne Aird)
Email: mail@gloscarers.org.uk

Parkinson's Disease Society – Cheltenham
c/o 13 Lynton Road, Hucclecote, Gloucester, GL3 3HX
Telephone: 01452 616 805 (Audrey Pound)
Email: N/A

Socially excluded people

Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People
Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 340 High Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JF
Telephone: 01242 584 853 (Sue Larkman)
Email: cwp@callnetuk.com

Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre (CHAC)
31 Prestbury Road, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 226 672
Email: chelthousingaid@aol.com

Hester's Way Neighbourhood Project
Community Resource Centre, Cassin Drive, Cheltenham, G51 7SU
01242 521319 (Bernice Thomson)
bernicet@hwnp.org.uk

Whaddon, Lynworth & Priors Neighbourhood Project
Project Centre, Wymans Road, Whaddon, Cheltenham, GL52 5PR
Telephone: 01242 516 960 (Trish Thompson)
Email: community@wlpnp.org.uk

Whaddon Residents Association
c/o 21 Clyde Crescent, Whaddon, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 239 007 (Claude Bullingham)
Email: N/A

Young people

Connexions (Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Teams)
4 Imperial Square, Cheltenham, GL50 1QB
Telephone: 01242 250 317
Email: info@connexionsglos.org.uk

Grapevine (Cheltenham)
Grosvenor Hall, Grosvenor Square, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 255 888 (Sarah Vallender)
Email: grapevine@glosgrapevine.org.uk

Gloucestershire Boys & Young Men Network
Youth and Community Service Boys and Young Men Lead, The Lodge, 47 Lewis Lane, Cirencester, GL7 1EB
Telephone: 01285 650 06 (Bernie Cox)
Email: berniecox@cotswoldyouth.freeserve.co.uk

MAD (Making a Difference) – Young People's Council
Grosvenor Hall, Grosvenor Square, Cheltenham
Telephone: 01242 251 921 (Kim Gibbons)
Email: madmail@cheltenham.gov.uk

Other bodies

Gloucestershire Farming Friends
Telephone: 01452 760 127
Email: N/A

Samaritans Cheltenham
Victoria House, Back Albert Place, Pittville, Cheltenham, GL52 2HN
Telephone: 01242 515 777
Email: N/A

Once the consultation exercise has been planned, attention needs to turn to designing the survey and the consultation event itself. The method that has been decided upon will influence the design, so for postal surveys and questionnaires it will need to be kept short and precise, but for face-to-face surveys or public meetings can offer more scope for open discussion.

There are, however, some general guidelines that may prove useful[2]:

6.1 Types of question

There are four main types of question:

Attitude	measure perceptions, attitudes and opinions (e.g. 'How satisfied are you with X?')
Awareness	tests public awareness and recognition of services, policies, information and publicity material (e.g. 'Did you know X is now Y?')
Behavioural	answers the questions about what, when, how and which. They are usually factual (e.g. 'How often do you use X?')
Classification	provides information about the respondents themselves (age, gender, ethnicity, disability, postcode details, etc). While this information is useful for the research, this section should be optional and confidentiality assured.

6.2 Open and closed questions

open questions

Allow the respondent to construct their own answer and sufficient space should be given on written questionnaires for people's answers. Data from open questions is more difficult to analyse but will give more qualitative information about what people think.

closed questions

Allow respondents to choose one or more answers from a range of options provided. They are easier to analyse quantitatively using numbers or percentages.

6.3 Rating scales

Rating scales are common in questionnaires or surveys and give respondents an equal number of positive and negative options to tick, e.g. 'Very Good – Good – Neutral – Poor – Very Poor'.

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[2] Guidelines adapted from 'Designing a questionnaire' page on *Connecting with Communities* website.

There is often a 'Don't Know' category as well, although this is sometimes omitted to force respondents to make a choice.

Numerical rating is also frequently used, e.g. 'On a scale of 1 – 5 how would you rate X?' If this method is used it is important to define which end of the scale is high/very good and there may be a lot of middle or neutral answers. There should also be consistency throughout the survey in terms of the scale, so if 1 is good and 5 is poor in one question, this should be the case in any other scales used.

6.4 Question wording

There are some basic points to remember to keep the wording of any questionnaire as simple, concise and accessible as possible:

> **?** Avoid jargon and keep the language simple;
> **?** Keep the questions short and precise;
> **?** Avoid asking more than one question in one sentence;
> **?** Avoid asking leading questions;
> **?** Keep the questions specific and to the point.

6.5 Questionnaire layout

Any questionnaire should be clearly laid out so the respondents can read and follow it. Accessibility is a key issue – most people can read print, but for some the time and effort to do so is immense and can act as a disincentive. The layout of the questionnaire can have a big influence in this. The RNIB have produced its excellent **Clear Print Guidelines** that will help to ensure information and surveys are made as accessible as possible.

Individual people will have different needs, and documents produced for individuals should be formatted according to these needs. But for general good practice, the **Clear Print Guidelines** are summarised below[3]:

The Clear Print Guidelines

Font size

- It is wrong to assume that the larger the font the better – some people, especially those with a small field of vision may prefer smaller fonts;

- Font size 14 is a good size to use to cover as many people as possible.

Font type

- Use a plain 'sans serif' font such as: Arial, Univers, Tahoma or Verdana;

- Letters should be evenly spaced.

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[3] The 'Clear Print Guidelines' are published by the RNIB and are available to buy from the website (www.rnib.org.uk). However, they can be downloaded from the University of Bristol website (www.bris.ac.uk) in the 'Access Unit' section under 'Factsheets'.

Font style

- Never print anything using all capital letters – a normal mixture of upper and lower case letters is easier to read;
- Use **bold weight** only to increase clarity;
- Avoid using *italics* as much as possible;
- Letters and words should be spaced conventionally;
- Leave extra space between lines of text and paragraphs for extra clarity, a good space to leave between lines of text is 6pt or half a line.

Alignment

- Do not use right-aligned or justified text as this can cause irregular spacing. Use left-align or centred only.

Colour

- Use dark ink on light paper (or a light ink on dark background) and avoid shaded boxes

Enlarging

- It is possible to enlarge print using a photocopier, but this often results in a grainy image and blurred text – print using the correct size direct from a laser or ink jet printer.

Paper

- Choose paper with a matt (not gloss) finish to minimise glare;
- Avoid thin paper where the print shows through

Image

- Avoid printing over patterns, photographs or illustrations;
- Try to position any images so that they do not interrupt the flow of the text.

6.6 Other general points

- Alternative languages and formats should be offered if applicable – this can be done using a translation box on the back of documents.
- There should be an introduction explaining what the purpose of the consultation is along with an assurance of confidentiality.
- Questions should be ordered logically with some simple introductory questions at the beginning. They should be grouped under headings with perhaps some examples on how to complete them.
- Questions can be routed – e.g. 'If you answered no to question X please go to question Y'.
- The survey should end with a thank you message including how and why the results will be used and publicised, the deadline (if applicable), and contact details.
- If the survey is to be sent to a large number of stakeholders, it may be worth doing a pilot testing on a small group first. Any potential problems would then be flagged up and amended before the survey is sent out for real.